

Boudica

Boudica or **Boudicca** (UK: /ˈbuːdɪkə, boʊˈdɪkə/, US: /buːˈdɪkə/), also known as **Boadicea** (/ˌboʊ(ə)diːsiːə/, also US: /ˌboʊæd-/) or **Boudicea**, and in Welsh as **Buddug** (IPA: [ˈbɪd̪ɨɡ]),^{[1][2]} was a queen of the British Iceni tribe who led an uprising against the conquering forces of the Roman Empire in AD 60 or 61. According to Roman sources, shortly after the uprising failed, she poisoned herself or died of her wounds, although there is no actual evidence of her fate. She is considered a British folk hero.^[3]

Boudica's husband Prasutagus, with whom she had two children whose names are unknown, ruled as a nominally independent ally of Rome, and left his kingdom jointly to his daughters and to the Roman emperor in his will. However, when he died, his will was ignored, and the kingdom was annexed and his property taken. According to Tacitus, Boudica was flogged and her daughters raped.^[4] Cassius Dio explains Boudica's response by saying that previous imperial donations to influential Britons were confiscated and the Roman financier and philosopher Seneca called in the loans he had forced on the reluctant Celtic Britons.^[5]

In AD 60 or 61, when the Roman governor Gaius Suetonius Paulinus was campaigning on the island of Mona (modern Anglesey) on the northwest coast of Wales, Boudica led the Iceni, the Trinovantes, and others in revolt.^[6] They destroyed Camulodunum (modern Colchester), earlier the capital of the Trinovantes but at that time a *colonia*, a settlement for discharged Roman soldiers and site of a temple to the former Emperor Claudius. Upon hearing of the revolt, Suetonius hurried to Londinium (modern London), the 20-year-old commercial settlement that was the rebels' next target. He lacked sufficient numbers to defend the settlement, and he evacuated and abandoned Londinium. Boudica led a very large army of Iceni, Trinovantes, and others against a detachment of the *Legio IX Hispana*, defeating them, and burning Londinium and Verulamium.

An estimated 70,000–80,000 Romans and Britons were killed in the three cities by those following Boudica,^[7] many by torture.^[7] Suetonius, meanwhile, regrouped his forces, possibly in the West Midlands; despite being heavily outnumbered, he decisively defeated the Britons. The crisis caused Nero to consider withdrawing all Roman forces from Britain, but Suetonius's victory over Boudica confirmed Roman control of the province. Boudica then either killed herself to avoid capture (according to Tacitus),^[8] or died of illness (according to Cassius Dio).^[9]

Interest in these events was revived in the English Renaissance and led to Boudica's fame in the Victorian era.^[10] Boudica has remained an important cultural symbol in the United Kingdom.

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Boudica



Queen Boudica in John Opie's painting *Boadicea Haranguing the Britons*, engraved by William Sharp

Born	<u>Britannia</u>
Died	c. 60 or 61 AD unknown
Other names	Boudicea, Boadicea, <i>Buddug</i>
Occupation	Queen of the <u>Iceni</u>
Spouse(s)	<u>Prasutagus</u>

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Name

Boudica has been known by several versions of her name. In the 16th century, Raphael Holinshed called her **Voadicia**, while Edmund Spenser called her **Bunduca**, a variation of which was used in the popular Jacobean play *Bonduca* of 1612.^[11] In the 18th century, William Cowper's poem *Boadicea, an ode* (1782) popularised an alternative version of the name.^[12]

Her name was spelt **Boudicca** in the most complete manuscripts of Tacitus, which through investigation of the language of the Celts was also proven to be misspelt with the addition of the second 'c'.^[13] The misspelling by Tacitus was copied, and further deviations of her name began to appear. Along with the second 'c' becoming an 'e,' in place of the 'u' appeared an 'a;' this is where the medieval (and most common) spelling 'Boadicea' is derived from.^[13]

In the later, and probably secondary, epitome of Cassius Dio in Greek she was Βουδουικα, Βουνδουικα, and Βοδουικα.

Kenneth Jackson concludes, based on the later development in Welsh (*Buddug*) and Irish (*Buaidheach*), that the name derives from the Proto-Celtic feminine adjective **boudīkā* 'victorious', that in turn is derived from the Celtic word **boudā* 'victory' (cf. Irish *bua* (Classical Irish *buadh*) 'victory', Scottish Gaelic *buaidheach* 'victorious; effective', Welsh *buddug*, *buddugol* 'victorious', *buddugoliaeth* 'victory'), and that the correct spelling of the name in Common Brittonic (the British Celtic language) is *Boudica*, pronounced [bɒʊˈdiːkaː]. The Gaulish version is attested in inscriptions as **Boudiga** in Bordeaux, **Boudica** in Lusitania, and **Bodicca** in Algeria.^{[14][15]}

The closest English equivalent to the vowel in the first syllable is the ow in "bow-and-arrow".^[16] John Rhys suggested that the most comparable Latin name, in meaning only, would be "Victorina".^[17] Alternatively, Graham Webster claims the name can be directly translated as "Victoria."^[18]

History

Historical sources

There are two primary sources from the classical period which reported on Boudica specifically, namely Tacitus and Cassius Dio.^[19] Tacitus' mention of Boudica appears in only two of his vast number of works: *the Annals*, c.AD 115-117; and the *Agricola*, c. AD 98.^[20] Both were published many years after Boudica's revolt, but Tacitus had an eyewitness at his disposal for the retelling of some of the events; his father-in-law Gnaeus Julius Agricola served in Britain three times as a military tribune under Suetonius Paulinus; it was during Suetonius' absence that Tacitus says the Britons began to congregate under Boudica.^[21] Cassius Dio's account, published over a century after Boudica's death, is only known from an epitome, written by John Xiphilinus. Dio provides a considerable amount of information not found in the work of Tacitus, suggesting that the sources he used were lost long ago.^[22]



1855 Bronze statue of Boadicea (Boudica) and her daughters at Captains Walk, Brecon. Statue by John Thomas of England.

It is generally agreed that Dio based his account on that of Tacitus, but simplifies the sequence of events.^[23] The abuses which Boudica and her daughters suffered at the hands of the Romans is not mentioned in Dio's account, instead he cites three different causes for the rebellion: the recalling of loans that were given to the Britons by Seneca; Decianus Catus' confiscation of money formerly loaned to the Britons by the Emperor Claudius; and Boudica's own entreaties.^{[24][25]}

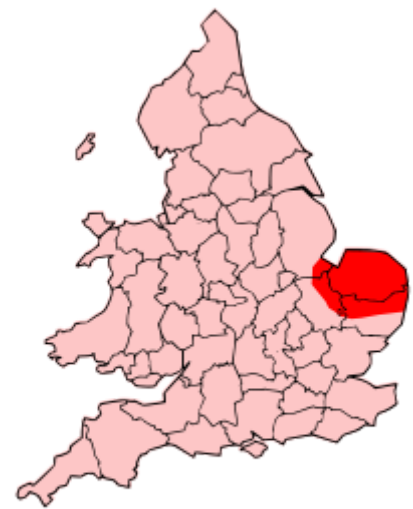
Tacitus depicts Boudica as a victim of Roman slavery and licentiousness, her fight against both of which made her a champion of barbarian and British liberty.^[26] It is also for this reason that Tacitus' narrative depicts Boudica as the standard of bravery as a free woman, rather than just a queen, sparing her the negative connotations associated with queenship in the ancient world.^[26]

Both Tacitus (Tac. *Annals*. 14.35) and Dio (Dio Cass. 62.3-6) incorporate fictitious speeches by Boudica in their work.^[19] These types of pre-battle speeches were invented by ancient historians as a means of arousing dramatic and rhetorical considerations from the reader.^[24] Boudica, being neither Greek nor Latin herself, would not have addressed her people in either language, and it is unlikely that either Tacitus or Dio would have been able to accurately recount any of her speeches.^[24] These speeches, though imaginary, portray an image of patriotism that laid the groundwork for the legend of Boudica to endure as the first real champion of the British people.^[27]

Background

Cassius Dio describes her as very tall and most terrifying in appearance, she had tawny hair hanging down to below her waist, a harsh voice and a piercing glare.^[28] He writes that she habitually wore a large golden necklace (perhaps a torc), a colourful tunic, and a thick cloak fastened by a brooch.^{[29][30]}

Boudica was the wife of King Prasutagus, ruler of the Iceni, a people who inhabited what is now modern Norfolk.^[31] When the Roman conquest of southern Britain began in AD 43 under the Emperor Claudius, Prasutagus allied his people with the Romans.^[32] The Iceni were proud of their independence, and had revolted in AD 47 when the then Roman governor Publius Ostorius Scapula planned to disarm all the peoples in the area of Britain under Roman control following a number of local uprisings. Ostorius defeated them and went on to put down other uprisings around Britain.^[33] The Iceni remained independent under Prasutagus, suggesting they were not absorbed into the Roman Empire after the first revolt.^[34] It is unknown whether he became the king only after Ostorius's defeat of the Iceni; but his status as a friendly king suggests he was a pro-Roman ruler, supporting the invasion of AD 43 and helping the Romans during the revolts in AD 47 to 48.^[35] Further evidence of Prasutagus' alliance with the Romans can be found in his will. Upon his death in AD 60/61, he left half of his fortune to his two daughters and the other half to the Roman Emperor Nero.^[28] Tacitus does not date the start of Prasutagus's reign and first mentioned him, as a long-reigning king who had died, when he wrote about Boudica's rebellion.^[36]



Location of Iceni territory in eastern England, including all of Norfolk; modern county borders are shown.

Tacitus mentions longstanding reasons for the Trinovantes (a tribe of people from what is now modern Essex) to hate Rome and join forces with the Iceni: "It was against the veterans that their hatred was most intense. For these new settlers in the colony of Camulodunum drove people out of their houses, ejected them from their farms, called them captives and slaves"^[37]

The immediate cause of the rebellion was gross mistreatment by the Romans. Tacitus wrote,

"The Icenian king Prasutagus, celebrated for his long prosperity, had named the emperor his heir, together with his two daughters; an act of deference which he thought would place his kingdom and household beyond the risk of injury. The result was contrary – so much so that his kingdom was pillaged by centurions, his household by slaves; as though they had been prizes of war." He added that Boudica was lashed, her two daughters were raped, and that the estates of the leading Iceni men were confiscated.^[37]

Cassius Dio wrote:

"An excuse for the war was found in the confiscation of the sums of money that Claudius had given to the foremost Britons; for these sums, as Decianus Catus, the procurator of the island maintained, were to be paid back." He also said that another reason was "the fact that Seneca, in the hope of receiving a good rate of interest, had lent to the islanders 40,000,000 sesterces that they did not want, and had afterwards called in this loan all at once and had resorted to severe measures in exacting it."^[38]

Dio's apocryphal speech of Boudica includes an address to the Trinovantes. She stressed to them how much better their life was before Roman occupation, stressing to them that wealth cannot be enjoyed under slavery, and places the blame upon herself for not expelling the Romans as they had done when Julius Caesar previously came for their land.^[27] The willingness of the barbarians to sacrifice a higher quality of living under the Romans, in exchange for their freedom and personal liberty, is an important interpretation of what Dio considered as motivation for the rebellions.^[27]

Uprising

Initial actions

In AD 60 or 61, the current governor and most senior Roman administrator in the province, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, was leading a campaign against the island of *Mona* (modern Anglesey) in Wales, where he had been participating in campaigns long before this one.^[21] Mona was conquered by the Roman army, who then heard the news of Boudica's rising and had to march rapidly eastward again. Under Boudica's lead, the Iceni and the Trinovantes comprised an army 120,000 strong to fight their common enemy, the Romans.^[39] Dio claims that before the initial revolts, Boudica called upon the British goddess of victory, Andraste, to aid them in battle.^[40]

The rebels' first target was Camulodunum (modern Colchester), a Roman colonia for retired soldiers.^[41] The reason for the colony was twofold: to introduce the natives to Roman style of life and government, and protect the land from revolting tribes.^[39] A Roman temple was erected to the deified Claudius, which coupled with brutal treatment of the natives by the veterans, made Camulodunum an ideal target.^[42] Once the revolt was under way, the only troops available to provide assistance (aside from the few within the colony) were two hundred auxiliaries located in London who were not equipped to fight Boudica's troops, and the colony of Camulodunum was captured.^[43] Those who survived the initial attack managed to hold the temple of Claudius for two days before they died.^[44] A bronze statue to the emperor Nero, which probably stood in front of the temple, was decapitated and its head taken as a trophy by Boudica's army.^[45] The future governor Quintus Petillius Cerialis, then commanding the Legio IX Hispana, attempted to relieve the city, but suffered an overwhelming defeat.^[46] The infantry with him were all killed – only the commander and some of his cavalry escaped. After this defeat, Catus Decianus fled to Gaul.^[46]

When news of the rebellion reached Suetonius, he hurried along Watling Street through hostile territory to Londinium. Suetonius considered giving battle there, but considering his lack of numbers and chastened by Petillius's defeat, decided to sacrifice the city to save the province.^[47] The wealthy citizens and traders had fled after the news of Catus Decianus defecting to Gaul, and the rest of the inhabitants were left to their own fate.^[48]

Londinium was abandoned to the rebels, who burnt it down, torturing and killing anyone who had not evacuated with Suetonius. The municipium of Verulamium (modern St Albans) was next to be destroyed, although the extent of its destruction is unclear.^[49]



Memorial to Lucius Duccius Rufinus, a standard bearer of the Ninth Legion, Yorkshire Museum, York

In the three settlements destroyed, between seventy and eighty thousand people are said to have been killed. Tacitus says that the Britons had no interest in taking or selling prisoners, only in slaughter by gibbet, fire, or cross.^[50] Dio's account gives more detail; that the noblest women were impaled on spikes and had their breasts cut off and sewn to their mouths, "to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets, and wanton behaviour" in sacred places, particularly the groves of Andraste.^[51]

Romans rally

While Boudica's army continued their assault in Verulamium (St. Albans), Suetonius regrouped his forces. According to Tacitus, he amassed a force including his own Legio XIV Gemina, some *vexillationes* (detachments) of the XX Valeria Victrix, and any available auxiliaries.^[52] The prefect of Legio II Augusta, Poenius Postumus, ignored the call,^[53] and a fourth legion, IX Hispana, had been routed trying to relieve Camulodunum,^[54] but nonetheless the governor now commanded an army of almost ten thousand men.

Suetonius took a stand at an unidentified location, probably somewhere along the Roman road now known as Watling Street, in a defile with a wood behind him – but his men were heavily outnumbered. According to Dio the rebels numbered 230–300 thousand. Boudica's army was crushed and according to Tacitus neither the women or the animals were spared.^[55]

The Roman slaughter of women and animals was unusual, as they could have been sold for profit, and point to the mutual enmity between the two sides.^[56] According to Tacitus in his *Annals*, Boudica poisoned herself, though in the *Agricola* which was written almost twenty years before the *Annals* he mentions nothing of suicide and attributes the end of the revolt to *socordia* ("indolence"); Dio says she fell sick and died and then was given a lavish burial.

Catus Decianus, who had fled to Gaul, was replaced by Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus. Suetonius conducted punitive operations, but criticism by Classicianus led to an investigation headed by Nero's freedman Polyclitus.^[57] Fearing Suetonius's actions would provoke further rebellion, Nero replaced the governor with the more conciliatory Publius Petronius Turpilianus.^[58] The historian Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus tells us the crisis had almost persuaded Nero to abandon Britain.^[59] No historical records tell what had happened to Boudica's two daughters.

Location of her defeat

The location of Boudica's defeat is unknown.^[60] Some historians favour a site somewhere along the Roman road now known as Watling Street.^[61] Kevin K. Carroll suggests a site close to High Cross, Leicestershire, on the junction of Watling Street and the Fosse Way, which would have allowed the Legio II Augusta, based at Exeter, to rendezvous with the rest of Suetonius's forces, had they not failed to do so.^[62] Manduessedum (Mancetter), near the modern town of Atherstone in Warwickshire, has also been suggested,^[63] and according to legend "The Rampart" near Messing, Essex and Ambresbury Banks in Epping Forest.^[64] More recently, a discovery of Roman artefacts in Kings Norton close to Metchley Camp has suggested another possibility.^[65] One individual has suggested the Cuttle Mill area of Paulerspury in Northamptonshire,^[66] where fragments of Roman pottery from the 1st century have been found.^[67]

In 2009, it was suggested that the Iceni were returning to East Anglia along the Icknield Way when they encountered the Roman army in the vicinity of Arbury Banks, Hertfordshire.^[68] In March 2010, evidence was published suggesting the site may be located at Church Stowe, Northamptonshire.^[69]

Legacy and legends

One of the earliest possible mentions of Boudica (excluding Tacitus' and Dio's accounts) was the 6th-century work *On the Ruin and Conquest of Britain* by the British monk Gildas. In it, he demonstrates his knowledge of a female leader whom he describes as a "treacherous lionness" who "butchered the governors who had been left to give fuller voice and strength to the endeavours of Roman rule." It is likely that Gildas is referring to Boudica in this statement.^[6] Polydore Vergil may have reintroduced her to British history as "Voadicea" in 1534.^[70] Raphael Holinshed also included her story in his *Chronicles* (1577) based on Tacitus and Dio.^[71]

16th–18th centuries

During the reign of Elizabeth I, Boudica began to be seen as an important figure in British history.^[72] During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the works of Tacitus were rediscovered, and therefore interest in Boudica and her rebellion was triggered. It has been said that the Elizabethan era was a time where her popularity could flourish as Elizabeth, in 1588, was required to defend Britain from a possible invasion of Spanish Armada. Boudica had once defended Britain as well, however from the Romans.^[73] In 1610, Shakespeare's younger contemporaries Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher to write a play, *Bonduca*, said to have been inspired by Holinshed's *Chronicles*.^[11] A version of that play called *Bonduca, or the British Heroine* was set to music by Henry Purcell in 1695; one of the choruses, *Britons, Strike Home!*, became a popular patriotic song in the 18th and 19th centuries.^[74] William Cowper wrote a popular poem, "Boadicea, an ode", in 1782.^[12]

19th-20th century

Britain

It was in the Victorian era that Boudica's fame took on legendary proportions as Queen Victoria came to be seen as Boudica's "namesake", their names being identical in meaning. Victoria's Poet Laureate, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, wrote a poem, "Boadicea", and several ships were named after her.^[75] *Boadicea and Her Daughters*, a statue of the queen in her war chariot (anachronistically furnished with scythes after the Persian fashion) was executed by Thomas Thornycroft over the 1850s and 1860s with the encouragement of Prince Albert, who lent his horses for use as models.^[76] Thornycroft exhibited the head separately in 1864. It was cast in bronze in 1902, 17 years after Thornycroft's death, by his son Sir John, who presented it to the London County Council. They erected it on a plinth on the Victoria Embankment next to Westminster Bridge and the Houses of Parliament, inscribed with the following lines from Cowper's poem:



Detail of Thomas Thornycroft's
Boadicea and Her Daughters

Regions Caesar never knew
Thy posterity shall sway.

A statue of her now stands guard over the city she razed to the ground.^{[14][77]} The area of King's Cross, London was previously a village known as Battle Bridge which was an ancient crossing of the River Fleet. The original name of the bridge was Broad Ford Bridge. The name "Battle Bridge" led to a tradition that this was the site of a major battle between the Romans and the Iceni tribe led by Boudica.^[78] The tradition is not supported by any historical evidence and is rejected by modern historians. However, Lewis Spence's 1937 book *Boadicea – warrior queen of the Britons* went so far as to include a map showing the positions of the opposing armies. There is a belief that she was buried between platforms 9 and 10 in King's Cross

station in London, England. There is no evidence for this and it is probably a post-World War II invention.^[79] At Colchester Town Hall, a life-sized statue of Boudica stands on the south facade, sculpted by L J Watts in 1902; another depiction of her is in a stained glass window by Clayton and Bell in the council chamber.^[80]



Photo of Boudica statue, 31 January 2013

Boudica was adopted by the Suffragettes as one of the symbols of the campaign for women's suffrage. In 1908, a "Boadicea Banner" was carried in several National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies marches. She appears as character in *A Pageant of Great Women* written by Cicely Hamilton, which opened at the Scala Theatre, London, in November 1909 before a national tour, and she was described in a 1909 pamphlet as "the eternal feminine... the guardian of the hearth, the avenger of its wrongs upon the defacer and the despoiler".^[81]

Wales

Buddug has yet to be conclusively identified within the canon of medieval Welsh literature and she is not apparent in the *Historia Brittonum*, the *Mabinogion* or Geoffrey of Monmouth's largely fictional *History of the Kings of Britain*.

Boudica (Buddug) was also chosen by the Welsh public as one of eleven statues of historical figures to be included in the Marble Hall at Cardiff City Hall. The statue was unveiled by David Lloyd George on 27 October 1916. Unlike the London chariot statue, it shows her as a more motherly figure without warrior trappings. The popularity of Buddug alongside other Welsh heroes such as Saint David and Owain Glyndŵr was surprising to many – of the statues, Buddug is the most ancient, the only female, and the only antecedent from outside the modern Welsh nation.^[82]

21st century

Permanent exhibitions describing the Boudican Revolt are at the Museum of London, Colchester Castle Museum and the Verulamium Museum.^[83] At the Norwich Castle Museum, a dedicated gallery includes a reproduction of an Iceni chariot.^[84] A 36-mile (58 km) long distance footpath called Boudica's Way passes through countryside between Norwich and Diss in Norfolk.^[85]

See also

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| ▪ <u>Gwenllïan ferch Gruffydd</u> | ▪ <u>Warrior Queen</u> |
| ▪ <u>List of women warriors in folklore</u> | ▪ <u>Boudica</u> |
| ▪ <u>Women in ancient warfare</u> | ▪ <u>Boadicea and Her Daughters</u> |
| ▪ <u>The Wrath of the Iceni</u> | ▪ <u>Boodikka</u> |

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